



STATE SENATOR

Bev Hammerstrom

SERVING THE 17TH DISTRICT

District Update

NEWSLETTERS
AVAILABLE ON-LINE

This newsletter and other great information, including the bi-weekly "Hammerstrom Hotline" are available on-line at my website www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hammerstrom.

Budget constraints will limit the number of mailings my office can send, so please bookmark this site and visit it often for the most up-to-date information on state government.

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Dear Friends:

It's back to school for kids and back to work for the Michigan Legislature. After a few weeks' hiatus, we will return in September to work on good public policy. I am greatly enjoying the new 17th Senate District which now includes additional portions of Washtenaw County as well as four townships in Jackson County. Another change this year is my leadership role. As Senate Majority Floor Leader it is my responsibility to direct the daily calendar on the Senate floor; it has been a hugely demanding and rewarding task thus far.

This newsletter will provide you with a wrap-up of legislative activity in the Senate so far this year. I hope that you find it informative and useful. Please do not ever hesitate to contact my office if you have an idea for legislation or need assistance with any state agency.

Sincerely,

Bev Hammerstrom
State Senator

Merit Awards Protected

The Michigan Merit Award Scholarship Trust Fund has helped over 141,000 young people finance the cost of their pursuit of higher education since its inception in 1999. That number will jump to well over 200,000 when eligible students from the Class of 2003 receive their scholarships. The Merit Award is funded mainly by tobacco settlement revenues. In November 2002, Proposal 4 called for reallocating the revenues to help defray the cost of treating tobacco-related illnesses. The voters defeated the ballot proposal, sending a clear message that they agreed with the way the money was currently being used, funding the Merit Award. After wrestling with the

budget, the Legislature and the Governor reached an agreement to maintain the Merit Award program and thus continue to help defray the costs of higher education for many Michigan families.

In the 17th Senate District, which includes all of Monroe County and portions of Washtenaw and Jackson counties, over 1,500 students received the Merit Award in 2002, and there are approximately 1,100 already scheduled to receive the award this year.



Knowledge of CPR/Safety Procedures A Must

We took a major step forward in continuing to protect our state's children this session with House Bill 4038 and Senate Bill 179. H.B. 4038 requires teachers to be certified in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and S.B. 179 requires school athletic coaches to be certified in sports safety training, either by completing a training course offered by the American Red Cross or an equivalent course approved by the State Board of Education.

Before the bills were introduced, there were no safety training requirements for coaches and teachers, yet they often are the first responders to an injury during practice and games, or in the classroom. The legislation mandates that CPR and first-aid training must be completed before teachers are certified by the Michigan Department of

Education and that sports safety training would be a prerequisite for athletic coaches before schools could hire them.

The bills further establish that a person who is certified and performs physical aid on another person is not liable for damages, making them consistent with the Good Samaritan Law. In addition, S.B. 179 exempts coaches who may also be doctors, nurses and other emergency personnel from receiving the additional training.

H.B. 4038, which was signed into law in June, and S.B. 179, which is in the House Committee on Education, have an effective date of July 1, 2004. Individuals coaching or teaching before July 1, 2004 or those with physical limitations would not be required to obtain certification.

Participating in the Legislative Process

People often wonder where Legislators get their ideas for legislation. While many bills are introduced at the request of an organization or association, the Governor, leadership, or in response to an event which has occurred, constituents can also play a role in helping get legislation drafted on issues of interest. Over the years, I have introduced a number of bills which began with a constituent call or a conversation at one of the county fairs. There are currently two issues which originated from constituents that hopefully will be completed in the fall.

The first bill, Senate Bill 106, designates the American Lotus Blossom as the official state symbol for clean water. The initiative was introduced after a Monroe County resident suggested it at one of the Great Lakes Conservation Task Force hearings conducted in 2001. The nation's largest aquatic plant faced possible extinction in Michigan not too long ago due to sewage discharges and industrial pollution in the Great Lakes. However, the lotus blossom has made a dramatic comeback and beds of the plant have shown up along the Lake Erie shoreline. This surprise abundance has led the City of Monroe to adopt

the lotus blossom as its official city logo. The lotus has also been identified in four other counties across Michigan, including Berrien, Kalamazoo, Ottawa and Wayne. The bill is now in the House of Representatives.

The second bill is in the early drafting stages, but the intention is to ensure centennial farmers receive ample notification before vegetation could be removed from their property by local units of government. This bill is in response to a situation where a farmer on a centennial farm in the district recently had his 100-year-old cherry trees chopped down by the local road commission. While the trees were currently in the right of way, that probably was not the case when they were originally planted over a century ago. The goal is to give farmers the opportunity to deal with the matter before historic property is destroyed. Our remarkable farms need to be protected in order to guarantee that generations another hundred years from now will be able to enjoy their beauty and history.



Protecting Our Environment

We took dramatic steps to further preserve our state's unique natural resources. The 2002 Great Lakes Conservation Task Force report offered an action plan to protect our waterways. Many recommendations from the task force have become reality and many are in the legislative process.

- A new user fee system to help protect our state's water pollution control programs was agreed upon.
- Senate Bill 289, legislation to protect Michigan's groundwater was passed and signed into law. The new Law requires the Department of Environmental Quality to compile a map of critical aquifers and create a management plan for large volume withdrawals.
- Legislation to allow responsible "beach grooming" practices was also enacted. The final compromise earned the support of both the Department of Environmental Quality and the affected property owners.
- "Adopt a Watershed" legislation was proposed to use community volunteers to help protect our water resources. This bill, Senate Bill 372, was passed by the Senate.
- A Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force was formed to gather citizen input and review Michigan's 26-year-old bottle return law. The committee will soon make recommendations on how to improve the law and overall recycling across the state.

My colleagues and I reintroduced a package of bills from last session that was also a recommendation of the task force aimed at protecting our lakes from the invasion of nonnative aquatic nuisance species. Senate Bills 226-229 prohibit the importation of any genetically engineered organism (GEO) without the permission of the director of the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Natural Resources may also restrict or prohibit the importation of any GEO. A GEO is produced when an organism is modified with the genetic material of another organism. For example, fish farmers may genetically alter salmon in order to get a faster growing, bigger fish. While this allows farmers to spend less on fish food and send the fish to the market sooner, the effects of these fish on the normal salmon population are unknown at this time.

Ensuring Fiscal Responsibility

We developed a plan of fiscal restraint which balanced the budget without raising taxes. The way the economy grows is by allowing Michigan families and job providers to keep more of what they earn. There were a number of challenges. But we saw plenty of opportunities, too, and took innovative steps to solve the problems.

- Seventeen (already planned) new road projects in high growth areas of Michigan were restored. These infrastructure improvements will have a significant impact on safety, traffic congestion, and future economic development.
- Michigan's perfect AAA bond rating was preserved. The budget puts \$73 million into the Budget Stabilization Fund, \$73 million into the new School Rainy Day Fund, and \$47 million into the Medicaid Trust Fund.
- The "Claim it Correctly" program, which collects lost revenue from unlawful, homestead property tax exemptions, was instituted.
- The "Driver Responsibility Program" was established. This new program levies added fees on drivers who accrue seven or more points on their driver's license, or are guilty of a serious driving violation such as DUI. Along with generating increased revenue, this program will help protect Michigan citizens on the road.
- The Joint Committee on Business Competitiveness was formed. The committee heard public testimony and will make recommendations to the Legislature on ways Michigan can remain economically competitive in the 21st Century.





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Anyone Can Get Involved

Eager to know more about a particular bill? Curious about how your legislator voted? Are you interested in attending a legislative committee hearing but don't know when it meets? All the answers are available for your convenience 24 hours a day at the Michigan Legislature website **www.michiganlegislature.org**. Following the status of a bill as it moves through the legislative process has never been easier. Options include looking up bills by number, bill sponsor or topic. Easy to use links provide access to the committee meeting schedules and the committee clerks. Legislative committee hearings are open to the public and must be announced a minimum of 18 hours in advance of the meeting. If you would like to be added to a committee's mailing list to receive meeting notices, contact the clerk of that committee.



Did You Know?

Consumers can sign up for the National Do-Not-Call list by telephone or through the internet. Visit **www.donotcall.gov** or call toll-free 1-888-382-1222 from the phone you wish to register.

Information about homeowners and automobile insurance is available at:

www.michigan.gov/ofis.

Consumers can also access interactive buyer's guides at this site.

Michigan citizens can get recorded, up-to-date information about West Nile Virus in Michigan by calling toll-free 1-888-668-0869.

Gasoline consumers can find the average price of gas in a city or zip code, as well as a listing of gas stations in that area at: **www.michigan.gov/gasprices**.

Natural gas prices are expected to increase substantially this winter. Consumers can find gas conservation tips and information on home heating help at: **www.michigan.gov/mpsc**.

Homeowners can go to **www.michigan.gov/mda** for detailed information on the Emerald Ash Borer.

